



The Reference Interview vs The Intake Interview

Jennifer Wishart, Job Readiness Trainer
Job Center, Richland County Public Library



The Job Seeker needs a good reference interview with a small amount of intake interview added.

The intake interview is the way a career advisor or counselor assesses the needs of a client and determines how to best meet those needs.

No one expects you to take on the role of career advisor, but it is good to know some of the questions and techniques to supplement your intake interview.

Many of the qualities of a good reference interview are the same as those of a good intake interview:

- Attending: **SOLAR** (Face the client **S**quarely, Adopt an **O**pen posture, **L**ean toward the client, Maintain **E**ye contact, Be **R**elaxed)
- Listening: content *and* feeling of message
- Reflecting: restating or summarizing the customer's main point

Unlike a career advisor, librarians usually don't get job seekers at the beginning of their job search. They get them when they:

1. Need a resume tomorrow
2. Need to fill out a specific application for a job that a friend told them about (which usually closes tomorrow)
3. Have realized they need to use a computer for their job search and have never touched one before.

Job seekers who come to the library are often emotionally fragile. They are feeling:

Helpless
Frustrated
Embarrassed
Overwhelmed

Lost
Nervous
Anxious

The job seeker may need a little more **empathy and listening** in the conversation leading up to their statement of needs.

In order to effectively determine and meet their needs, you need to know what their technical skills are, a little about their work history/educational background, and what their career goals are.

Some Intake Interview questions you can use in your Reference Interview:

1. What brought you here today?
2. How can I/we help you?
3. Tell me about your last job. What kind of work did you do? How did you like it? How did the job end?
4. What kind of job do you think you would be interested in? Do you already have the skills to do that job or do you think you would need more training?

Our BST Reference staff deal with many Job Center customers because the Job Center and Business/Science/Technology Departments share the same physical space.

Our staff said that the main thing they do differently with Job Center customers is try to assess their **computer skills**. How well they use the computer will affect the type of resources they use and how much assistance they will need in using them.

Feedback from RCPL Staff – questions they ask:

1. What type of job are you looking for?
2. What kind of work have you done in the past?
3. Do you have a library card?
4. Do you have an e-mail address?
5. Do you have an updated resume?
6. Have you heard about our Job Center services? (classes, typing tutorials, tip sheets, etc.)
7. Are you familiar with using the computer?
8. Do you need to work on a resume or are you searching for open positions?
9. Do you have the addresses for the Web sites you need to get to?

New reference resources for Job Seekers? Tip sheets, Resume templates/samples, phone books, List of local companies/websites, **Sciway.net/jobs**, "How to" resume, cover letter, job search and interview skills books.

Make contact with referral agencies for customers who need more specialized one-on-one assistance. (Turning Pages for computer and reading literacy, USC's TRiO Program for ed.)

Things you can do:

Help the customer set up an email account. Write down the email website (Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.) their username and password and make sure they know to keep it.

Help them find an online job application from a company name or website.

Help them get started on a job application – explain how to use the TAB key to move between boxes and what the *means (required field).

Help them get started on a resume using a tip sheet or print or electronic template.

Periodically check on them when time allows and extend their computer time if they need it and if your system allows.

Communicate with other staff members your work with that customer when your desk coverage shift ends. (So staff will know what the patron is talking about if they ask a question after you leave.)

Provide them with job search resources such as websites, books and tip sheets.

Refer them to partnering agencies for more in-depth individualized services.